

Gender Stereotypes

Grades 9-12, Lesson 4

Student Learning Objectives

The student will be able to ...

1. define the term “gender stereotype.”
2. identify at least 4 gender stereotypes.
3. name at least one way in which gender stereotypes may limit one’s ability to make healthy decisions.

Agenda

1. Introduce the lesson.
2. Facilitate a Gender Box Brainstorm using the *Gender Boxes* worksheet.
3. Help the class analyze the brainstorm.
4. Facilitate the small group Scenario Activity, using the handouts *Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values* and *Scenarios*.
5. Have small groups report back to the class.
6. Summarize the lesson’s major concepts.
7. Administer *Sexual Attitudes Survey*, so you can tally results to report back as part of Lesson 6.
8. Assign Homework.

This lesson was most recently edited on January 20, 2011.

Materials Needed

Student Materials

- **Gender Boxes Worksheet** (one copy per student)
- **Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout** (one copy per student)
- **Scenarios Activity** (one copy per student)
- **Sexual Attitudes Survey** (one copy per student)
- **Individual Homework: Thinking about Gender Stereotypes** (one copy per student)
- **Family Homework: Talking about Gender Stereotypes** (one copy per student)

Reminder: The English version is on the last page of this lesson plan. You will find the *Family Homework* in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic at www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH – click on “Parents & Guardians”.

Teacher Preparation

- **Make copies** of Materials Needed (see above).

Standards

National Health Education Standard:

- **Standard 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.
 - Performance Indicator 2.12.2:** Analyze how the culture supports and challenges health beliefs, practices, and behaviors.
 - Performance Indicator 2.12.7:** Analyze how the perceptions of norms influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.

Washington State Health Education Standard:

- **Essential Academic Learning Requirement (EALR) 3:** The student analyzes and evaluates the impact of real-life influences on health. Understands how family, culture, and environmental factors affect personal health.
 - Grade Level Expectations (GLE): 3.1.1:** Analyzes how family and cultural diversity enriches and affects personal health behaviors.

Activities

NOTE: Instructions to you are in regular font. A suggested script is in *italics*. Feel free to modify the script to your style and your students' needs.

- 1. Introduce the lesson:** *Today, we are going to talk about gender and gender stereotypes. Can anyone give me a good definition of a stereotype?*

A good basic definition is: an idea or image about an entire group of people. Although the stereotype may be true for a few members of the group, it is assumed to be true for all members.

If needed, give an example: For example, one stereotype is that teenagers are lazy. Although there certainly are teenagers who don't do much (just as there people of all ages), most teenagers are active and productive.

For these next few lessons we will be learning about decision making, and how good decision-making can help us in our relationships and in taking care of our health. Gender stereotypes are an important part of this discussion because they can impact how we make decisions. We will talk more about this throughout this lesson. Let's start with a brainstorming activity about gender stereotypes.

2. Facilitate a Gender Box Brainstorm.

Hand out *Gender Boxes Worksheets*. Ask students to fill out the worksheets as the class moves through the activity. (Note: completed *Gender Boxes* worksheets will be essential to the homework assignment.)

Draw two large squares next to each other on the chalkboard or whiteboard. Make sure there is plenty of room to write both inside and outside of the boxes. Write "**Act Like a Man**" directly above the top of the square (see *Gender Boxes Worksheet*).

Ask students: *If someone is told to "act like a man," what does that mean? What are some of the stereotypes we have about how men should act? You don't need to raise your hands – just shout out your answers, and I'll write them up here.*

Write responses inside the square. If students are stuck, ask clarifying questions:

- *How are "real men" supposed to act?*
- *If we were watching a movie, what would the leading man in the movie be like?*
- *What are some things that boys are taught about being a man?*
- *What messages do boys' toys give them about who they should be as they get older?*
- *How do "real men" communicate? What about relationships? What about sex?*

(Make sure the list includes the following words – even if you have to add them yourself – strong, tough, in control.)

Students may want to move beyond the activity saying stereotypical things, and may state that "not all men are like this," or "this is a stereotype," or "I'm a man and I'm not like this."

That's great; they are simply grasping the concept more quickly than some of their classmates may be doing. If this happens, validate what they say (*You're right – we are talking about stereotypes*) and reframe the activity (*We're looking at stereotypes and expectations now, but we will move beyond that in the next part of the activity.*) After about 10-15 responses, say: *OK, now turn your worksheet over on your desk. We will complete the next part as a group only.*

Reference square on board: *If this is how a man is supposed to act, then what kinds of things are men and boys called if they step outside of this box?*

Some examples might include: fag, sissy, girly, weak, wimpy, gay, weird, queer

Write students' responses around the outside of the square on the board, encouraging students to be frank and honest in their use of words. This means that students will say words like "faggot" and "queer," but this is okay and will help frame the next pieces of the lesson.

Next, move to the 2nd square and write **"Act Like a Lady"** directly above the top of the square.

Let's also look at what it means to "act like a lady." We'll do the same thing that we did for the "act like a man" box, so let's start with what it means for someone to "act like a lady." You shout out the answers and I'll write them up.

(Make sure the list includes the following words – even if you have to add these yourself – emotional, polite, takes care of others.)

You can use the same clarifying questions for both of the "act like a..." boxes. Then, move on to the next question (*what kinds of things are said if someone steps outside of this box?*) and write the responses on the outside of the square.

Some examples might include: lesbian, gay, dyke, ball-buster, bitch, ugly, uptight, weird, queer

Referring now to both boxes, ask students:

- *How do these words keep people in the box?*
- *What kinds of things do people do to keep others in the box, besides name-calling? Are there specific behaviors you can think of?* (Answers could include: bullying, harassment, spreading rumors.)

Debrief the final portion of the activity by explicitly linking homophobia to gender stereotypes:

Obviously, these are offensive words about men and women. You probably also noticed that many of these words are hurtful or offensive words about gay people. When men and women don't act like people think they should, they are often labeled gay or lesbian, and in this situation, these words are meant as insults.

If students didn't already say this during the activity, mention the following:

- *These words also reinforce harmful stereotypes about gay and lesbian people, and can cause people to act in stereotypical ways out of fear that they will be labeled as gay or lesbian.*
- *Fear, discomfort and hatred of gay and lesbian people is called homophobia, and you can see here how homophobia even affects people who are not gay, by pressuring people to “act like a man” or “act like a lady.” Does that make sense to everyone?*

3. Help the class analyze the brainstorm.

Explain: The reason we’re all so familiar with these stereotypes is because we are always being taught what is a “real” man or “real” woman. Of course, some of these qualities are true for some people – some women are very nurturing, or some men are strong. They are still stereotypes, however, because we expect ALL men and women to act this way, and of course all of these qualities are not true for all men and women.

Ask: Where are some places we get messages about what it means to be a man or woman? (Answers should include things like: movies, tv shows, commercials, and also may include: my family, religion, and school.)

Respond: Good. It sounds like these messages come from lots of different places, and we get these messages all the time. We could also say that some of these messages are so pervasive that they have become “cultural values,” which means that they are woven into the U.S. culture as expectations that are solely based on your gender. Of course not everyone who lives in the U.S. is from here originally, although there are many other cultures that have similar values to these. Regardless, anyone who lives in the U.S. is influenced by the dominant cultural values that exist here, to some extent.

When something becomes so pervasive that it is a cultural value, it can influence all areas of our lives, including dating, sex, and relationships. U.S. cultural values about gender can sometimes limit people or even lead them to make unhealthy decisions.

It is important to note that there is nothing inherently wrong with these values. It’s great to be strong or to be polite. The problem is when all men or women are expected to behave in these ways, and when they are expected to ALWAYS behave this way. What about the moments when you are not strong, or you need to be assertive instead of polite? That’s when these values can be limiting.

We are going to take a closer look at some of these characteristics and think about how they can be used in ways that are not limiting. Of course, someone could always decide to be assertive and just forget about being polite. But, there is so much pressure to conform to these values, and they may be characteristics that people value highly themselves. So, let’s take a moment to think about how to use these characteristics to make choices that we feel genuinely comfortable with.

4. Facilitate the small group Scenario Activity

Pass out the *Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout* and the *Scenarios Worksheet*. Explain:

We're going to start by going over the example scenario on your Scenarios Worksheet about Felicia. We will go over it as a group, so we can all get a feel for how this activity works. Please take a look at the Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout – this goes into greater detail about what each characteristic could mean, and will be helpful when doing the activity.

Read the example scenario out loud (or a student could do the reading, if appropriate.)

Felicia complains to her friends when her boyfriend hurts her feelings but doesn't tell him.

Ask students:

- *What cultural value, or values, is likely influencing Felicia's actions? Let's look at the Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout. Which of the values from this sheet do you think is influencing Felicia's actions? (Answers could include the value of politeness or emotions.)*
- *How could she use the same value (or a different cultural value) to help express her feelings to her boyfriend? (Answers might include: she could use the value of emotion to express her feelings to her boyfriend; she could use the value of politeness to keep her boyfriend informed of how she's feeling; she could use the value of taking care of others to tell her boyfriend what she's feeling in the interest of keeping their relationship healthy.)*

Divide the class into 6 groups and assign one scenario to each group.

Instruct the small groups: Read the scenario with your group, and discuss the questions. Write the answers down on your piece of paper. We will be sharing the answers with the large group.

5. Have small groups report back to the class.

6. Summarize the lesson's major concepts.

Thanks for the great observations and ideas. You all came up with lots of great ways to use these cultural values to support healthy relationships. I hope that going forward, everybody has a better understanding of

- *what gender stereotypes are,*
- *how they can keep us from having healthy relationships, and*
- *how we can use the positive aspects of these cultural values to treat each other better.*

7. Administer Sexual Attitudes Survey, so you can tally the results to report back as part of Lesson 6.

Explain:

- *I want to take just a moment to give you all a survey to complete.*
- *The survey has 5 statements, with two columns next to it. You will see that the first column is for you to record how YOU feel about the statement, and the second column is for you to record how you think other people your age would answer the question.*
- *There are no right or wrong answers, just write what you honestly think and **DO NOT** put your name on it.*

- *I will collect the surveys as soon as you are done, and I will report the answers back to you in a couple of days, when we do a different FLASH lesson.*

8. Assign Homework.

a. *Individual Homework: Thinking about Gender Stereotypes*

b. *Family Homework: Talking about Gender Stereotypes*

Reminder: Besides the English Version of *Family Homework* on the last page of this lesson plan, you will find the *Family Homework* in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Arabic online by going to www.kingcounty.gov/health/FLASH and clicking on "Parents & Guardians."

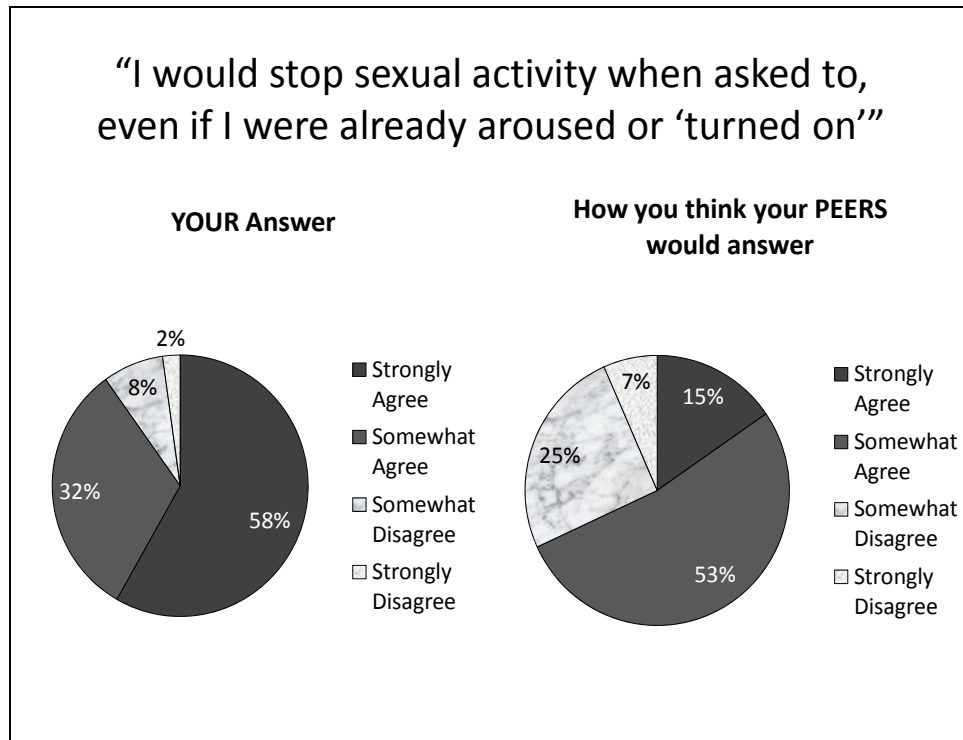
Important Note to Teachers! Do this tonight to prepare for Lesson 6

Tally the results of the *Sexual Attitudes Survey* (activity 7, above) or have a Teaching Assistant do so. Plan to display results for a few items from the survey, particularly the ones where students answered most favorably, i.e. where the majority agreed with the statement.

Here are instructions for turning the results into pie graphs in order to present them back to the class in Lesson 6 ...

1. Open PowerPoint and Click on "Insert" on your toolbar.
2. Click on "Chart".
3. Choose "Pie" chart.
4. Once you click on "pie" chart, Excel will open. Title chart "Your Answer."
5. Fill in "Strongly Agree," "Somewhat Agree," "Somewhat Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree" in the left column.
6. In the next column, fill in the number of students that answered to the corresponding choice.
7. When finished inputting all data, press "enter."
8. The data will appear in a pie chart back on PowerPoint. See example on Page 8 of this lesson.
9. To change colors of the chart, right click on the specific piece of the pie, and "fill" the piece with your color of choice. (You may want to make "Strongly Agree" and "Somewhat Agree" in similar colors; same with "Somewhat Disagree" and "Strongly Disagree")
10. To insert second chart, "insert" chart from top menu. You will need to resize your first chart in order to fit the second chart on the same slide. This way, students can compare side by side their answer vs. how they thought their peers would answer the same question.
11. Follow directions 3 to 10 above for the second chart. Title it "What you think your Peers would answer."
12. Create a "new slide" for the next item on the survey. Follow directions 2 to 12 with the survey data from the next item.

Example:



Related Activities for Integrated Learning

ART

Make a collage about gender stereotypes, using images and words cut out of magazines.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Write a spoken word piece, poem or song lyrics about unrealistic gender stereotypes and the pressure that a person might feel to conform to strict gender roles.

Gender Boxes Worksheet

“Act Like a Man”

A large, empty square box with a thick black border, intended for a student to draw or write about what it means to 'act like a man'.

“Act Like a Lady”

A large, empty square box with a thick black border, intended for a student to draw or write about what it means to 'act like a lady'.

Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout

These stereotypes about how men and women should act have become part of U.S. cultural values. These values represent the dominant culture here in the U.S. Not everyone who lives in the U.S. is from here originally, although there are many other cultures that have similar values to these. Even though individuals and families may not believe in these values, they are so common that they can influence people without them even knowing it.

Values associated with Men

Strong = Not needing anyone's help; standing by the decisions you make; confident and independent; physically strong

Tough = Able to withstand emotional and physical discomfort; not crying if you're hurt; heterosexual; not "girly"

In Control = Makes decisions for self and others, others don't make decisions for you; can do what you want to do and say what's going to happen; being responsible for the safety of others

Values associated with Women

Emotional = empathy (able to relate to others and their emotions); showing or expressing feelings, especially sadness, excitement, fear, happiness, and nervousness; talking about feelings, "talking things out"; sharing emotions with others

Polite = good manners – saying please and thank you; deferring to authority; not speaking out of turn; not hurting other peoples' feelings

Taking Care of Others = putting the needs of others first/before their own; nurturing others; noticing the needs of others & responding to those needs; doing things for others/helping others; not hurting others emotionally or physically

Scenarios Activity

Complete the example scenario with the whole class – make sure to fill in the answers on your own sheet. Complete additional scenarios in small groups.

EXAMPLE: Felicia complains to her friends when her boyfriend hurts her feelings, but doesn't tell him.

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Felicia's actions?

How could she use the same value (or a different cultural value) to help express her feelings to her boyfriend?

1. Bruno joins in when his teammates are calling someone homophobic slurs.

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Bruno's actions?

How could he use the same value (or a different cultural value) to resist the pressure to victimize someone?

2. Jin wants to wear a pink shirt but is afraid it makes him look like a sissy.

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Jin's actions?

How could he use the same value (or a different cultural value) to help him wear what he wants?

3. Cooper tells his girlfriend that he wants to have sex tonight, but doesn't ask her what she wants to do.

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Cooper's actions?

How could he use the same value (or a different cultural value) to include his girlfriend in the decision?

- 4. Dominique calls her friend's boyfriend, Kenneth, "pathetic" because he apologized for hurting her feelings at lunch.**

What cultural male value (or values) is Dominique reinforcing with her comment?

How could she use the same value (or a different cultural value) to support Kenneth in apologizing to his girlfriend?

- 5. Aleesha goes along with her boyfriend when he wants to have sex (even if she's not in the mood) because she doesn't want to hurt his feelings.**

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Aleesha's actions?

How could she use the same value (or a different cultural value) to express that she's not in the mood?

- 6. Diante doesn't insist on using condoms because her boyfriend says they don't feel good.**

What cultural value (or values) is likely influencing Diante's actions?

How could she use the same value (or a different cultural value) to encourage her boyfriend to wear a condom?

Sexual Attitudes Survey

Please rank each of the following 5 statements. In the first column please record how strongly you agree or disagree with each of them. In the second column please record how strongly you believe other people your age would agree or disagree with the statement. There are no right or wrong answers, just write what you honestly think. Please DO NOT put your name on this survey.

Statement	YOUR answer	How you think your peers would answer
I would stop sexual activity when asked to, even if I were already aroused or “turned on.”	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
It is important to get consent, or permission, before sexual touch with a partner.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
I think someone should stop the first time their partner says no to sexual activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
Even if two people have had sex in the past, it is still important to make sure the other person is giving consent the next time they want to have sex.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
In a sexual relationship, it is important for partners to talk about what they are comfortable with and respect the other person’s boundaries.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree

This survey was adapted with permission from “*Violence Related Behaviors and Beliefs (VRBB) Insert*” created by Western Washington University’s Prevention and Wellness Services.

Individual Homework:

Thinking about Gender Stereotypes

Review the *Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values Handout* you received today in class. Use the attributes listed to answer the following questions.

As a reminder, the gender stereotypes listed on your handout are:

- **Men** are: strong, tough, and in control.
- **Women** are: emotional, polite, and taking care of others.

Please write a two or three paragraph (300-500 word) essay about a time when you felt pressure to act in a certain way because of your gender. The attributes listed above and on your *Gender Stereotypes and Dominant Cultural Values* handout may help you think of an example. The pressure could be coming from someone else, like your parent or friend, from inside yourself, or from some other force, like the media.

Please also answer the following questions in your essay: Did you act in the way that was expected of you? Why or why not? Was the pressure to behave in a certain way helpful to you, or did it make the situation more difficult?

Family Homework: Talking about Gender Stereotypes

All Family Homework is optional. You may complete an Individual Homework assignment instead.

PURPOSE: This is a chance to share with one another some of your own (and your family's, your religion's) beliefs about sexuality and relationships. It will also give you a chance to get to know one another a little better.

DIRECTIONS: Find a quiet place where the two of you – the student and the trusted adult (parent, guardian, stepparent, adult friend of the family, best friend's parent, etc.) – can talk privately. Set aside about 10 minutes. During this time, please give full attention to one another ... no texting, watching TV and so on.

Now ask one another the following questions, with the understanding that:

- You are each welcome to say, "That one is too private. Let's skip it."
- What you discuss will not be shared with anyone else, even within the family, unless you give one another permission to share it.
- It's OK to feel silly or awkward and it's important to try the homework anyway.

We recommend that you take turns asking questions. When it is your turn to listen, really try to understand the other person's response.

SHARE AND EXPLAIN the completed *Gender Boxes* worksheet with your trusted adult.

DISCUSS:

- What surprised you about these gender boxes?
- What did not surprise you?
- What is something you learned about each other from having this discussion?



for lesson 4

Family Homework: Gender Stereotypes – Confirmation Slip

FOR FULL CREDIT, THIS HOMEWORK IS DUE: _____

We have completed this Homework Exercise.

Date: _____

student's signature

signature of family member or trusted adult

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